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SUBJECT: TURKEY PROTESTS USE OF "PETERS MAP" IN NATO
DEFENSE COLLEGE CLASS

¶1. (SBU) MFA Deputy Director General for Americas Affairs Murat Esenli called us under instructions on September 21 to complain about the use at the NATO Defense College of a map authored by retired U.S. Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Peters that redraws the boundaries of Turkey and neighboring countries to create an independent Kurdistan. He noted that the map was presented by an active-duty US colonel, and lamented that he had thought this was resolved.

¶2. (SBU) This was Esenli's second call in six weeks on the "Peters map," which appeared in the June 2006 edition of Armed Forces Journal together with an article entitled "Blood Borders: How a Better Middle East Would Look," that received extensive coverage in Ankara. In late July, he and other Turkish officials complained about the map, with some suggesting that it depicted the U.S. vision of the "new Middle East" outlined by Secretary Rice. Not to miss an opportunity, the Turkish daily Cumhuriyet plastered the map across the front page of its July 27 edition. (Note: Cumhuriyet and Vatan dailies had both previously published the map and continue to do so. End Note.) We responded with a press statement on August 3 -- which Esenli had requested to give the MFA its own ammunition against the map -- stating that neither the publication nor the author had any affiliation with the USG and that the opinions reflected in the article did not reflect US policy.

¶3. (SBU) Esenli's September 21 call followed on the heels of an informal contact on September 20 by a retired Turkish military general close to current Deputy Chief of the General Staff (DCHOD) GEN Ergin Saygun, who noted the DCHOD's unhappiness with the use of the map. According to the general, a NATO officer (presumably Turkish) in the class protested the presentation of the map as soon as it was unveiled but his request to have it taken down was rejected. As a result, the general said, Turkey's Ambassador to Italy was engaged on the issue. (Note: Colleagues with whom we spoke at Embassy Rome and US NATO were unaware of the map "crisis" or of any complaint by Turkey's missions to Italy or to NATO. End Note.)

¶4. (SBU) COMMENT: We will continue to reinforce with our Turkish interlocutors that Peters' opinions do not reflect those of the US government and restate the importance with which we hold freedom of speech and the value of discussion and debate, particularly in establishments of higher learning. The persistence of the story here, however, does highlight the government's sensitivity regarding the

country's own territorial integrity. END COMMENT.

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